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occupies twenty-three pages, the present volume deals exclusively with the Fringillidae or Sparrow Family. There are keys to the genera, species and subspecies, much after the style of Ridgway's "Manual," with pertinent descriptions, statements of distribution, and extended synonymies of each. "The descriptions are limited to essential characters," and in the case of subspecies to brief comparative diagnoses, with average measurements of available specimens.

The distribution of each form is stated in detail. Extreme localities are definitely named, and, if irregular, the range is accurately indicated. This feature is a most useful one to the student, and is far in advance of most previous systematic books. The time is past when a stated habitat like "Western United States," "Mountainous regions of the West," or even "California," is of any intrinsic value. It is to be hoped that the next A. O. U. check-list will follow Mr. Ridgway's precedent.

The most valuable part of the present work to the student of birds I believe to be the carefully prepared synonymy accompanying each description. This serves as an index to the literature of a species, as well as a guide to the systematic worker. In most cases a hint in parenthesis gives an idea as to the nature of the article referred to, or at least as to the locality to which it pertains.

In the matter of nomenclature, the A. O. U. Code is followed. Strict adherence to the original spelling of scientific names is maintained. "The correction of an author's orthographical errors is a pernicious practice." Vernacular names, however, are not quite up to date in that proper possessives retain the superfluous "'s'!"

As affecting California the author has made a few rulings open to question. In some cases I believe insufficient material has led to unwarranted acceptance or rejection of forms. For instance, a race of the spurred towhee, *Pipilo maculatus atratus*, is distinguished, the type being from Pasadena. [*Pipilo maculatus*] *megalonyx* was described by Baird from Fort Tejon which is only sixty miles from Pasadena and in practically the same faunal area. Moreover I have failed to find a single substantial character to separate a series of towhees from Pasadena and a series from the Sierras. Of the former only about one male out of three have the upper parts, including the rump, continuously black, this being the principal character assigned. On the other hand, Mr. Ridgway failed to recognize *Pipilo maculatus falcifer*, which has several discoverable characters, and which also represents a distinct faunal area. *Pipilo fuscus carolae* is admitted, but does not prove well-founded.

These points and others will all in time be worked out satisfactorily. Meanwhile we

must sincerely thank Mr. Ridgway for his immense expenditure of time and talent in the preparation of this invaluable monograph. The succeeding parts will be awaited with renewed anticipation. The whole work will form an absolutely necessary working manual for all twentieth century systematic ornithologists.

JOSEPH GRINNELL.

STORIES OF BIRD LIFE. By T. Gilbert Pearson. With illustrations by and under the supervision of Jno. L. Ridgway, pp. 236.

This is a popular work of 20 chapters given over to breezy narratives, and is in all respects a thoroughly model bird book, reflecting the varied experiences of the author's many years afield. The work is intended largely as a text-book for intermediate grades in schools but is nevertheless one of the most meritorious popular works which has appeared. It possesses a delight in that rhapsodic sentiment is lacking and the experiences of Mr. Pearson are given in a peculiarly interesting vein. After all, our writers have found nothing so productive of appreciation as the plain truth, simply told, which permits the beginner to evolve healthy conclusions.

Each chapter of the book treats of some individual species or else of some group amid its natural surroundings. Thus the opening chapter deals with "The Arredondo Sparrow Hawks," which for years established themselves in a certain grove and came to be familiarly known to the author. Charming indeed is "The Childhood of Bib-Neck," a chapter devoted to the early life of one of a brood of Wilson plover, which underwent a precarious infancy in the midst of preying hawks, piratical gulls and the omnipresent gunner along the ocean shore.

"An Old Barred Owl" is a chapter cleverly portraying the craftiness of a "swamp owl" who made frequent visits to the various farm-yards, only to be outwitted later by the inexorable grip of a steel trap, while his mate likewise fell prey to a "figuré-four" box and was summarily executed by an irate farmer. Each chapter of the book is peculiarly well rounded out. The plates by Mr. Ridgway are excellent while the numerous text figures lend much to the attractiveness of the volume. B. F. Johnson Publishing Co., Richmond, Va. Price 60 cents, postpaid.—C. B.

BIRDS OF SONG & STORY by Elizabeth and Joseph Grinnell is a popular bird book of 150 pages, illustrated by numerous color-type plates of mounted birds. The text is by Mrs. Grinnell who deals with a number of our best known birds in her usual charming manner, and the work should appeal to those who love popular bird literature. A. W. Mumford, Chicago.